

A

REVIEW

OF THE

Affairs of *FRANCE*:

With Observations on TRANSACTIONS at Home.

Tuesday, December 25. 1705.

I Explain'd in my last, what I mean by the Exhortation to the *Dissenters*, to be Content; I think the Reasons drawn from comparing their present Liberty, with the precarious Condition of their Circumstances in the recent Ages of the Reformation, very just. If looking back on the want of our Enjoyments, will not move us to value and be thankful for them, when we have them, no humane Arguments can do it.

But we have some People, who by continual poring upon the Advantages and Blessings they want, or rather wou'd have, grow blind to those that they enjoy. These are like the Disciples, who expected our Saviour should have restor'd the temporal Kingdom to Israel, and were sadned and disturb'd at the Loss and Disappointment in that little and ill-grounded Expectation under the Glorious Dispensation of Mankind's Redemption.

What shall we say to those People, that, because the few things which remain, are not yet brought to pass, look upon all that they Enjoy with Eyes of Dissatisfaction and Uneasyness; having neither Patience to wait the Work, which has been thus far done, in shorter time than could be hop'd for; nor Eyes to see, or Sense to value the Mercies they Enjoy, by continually poring upon those they want?

Let these People be who they will, for I value not Distinctions; in this Case I must deal very plainly with them, and tell them;

1. They dishonour the *Dissenters* in General, and Disgrace the whole Body; too much confirming that scandalous Reproach of their Enemies, That they are an *unsatisfied restless Party*, that will be content with nothing; and upon this supposed Foundation, infinite Slanders are raised up-

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on the *Dissenters* in General, and a seeming Mask made for the Enemies of the Protestant Religion, to disguise their Eternal Endeavours to divide us, and foment Jealousies among us.

Pray, Gentlemen, let us go hand in hand back a little to the Days of King *Charles the Second*, and tell us, if a Man had come to you under the Weight of your Afflictions, under your Five-mile-Acts, Uniformity-Laws, *Et cetera*-Oaths, Persecution-Proclamations, under your Excommunications, pulling down Meeting-houses, Fines, Imprisonments, and the like; and said, well, Brethren, I know not what to say to you, if it was otherwise, you would not be contented; if you had a Liberty of Worship by Act of Parliament, if the Church shou'd come up to your Religious Demands, you would be still the same Men; you would be as discontented for your Civil Demands; and unless every thing was done, you could think of, you would never be easy; what would you have said in such a Case? Would you not have been ready to say with the Text, *Is thy Servant Dog?* &c.

Now, Gentlemen, we have a Legal Toleration, what has been our Continued Discontent ever since that? I will not say there have been some among us too warm, at pushing their Privileges to the Extent; but I must say, there are among us too many, that do not put a due value upon this Liberty; that too much forget the Time when they wanted it; that forget the Vows of their Afflictions; and think their Title to more, excuses their Unthankfulness for what they have.

The best and most justifiable Ground of our Uneasiness, since we have been under the Legal Settlement of a Parliamentary Toleration, is and must be, *or I shall be at a loss to find it*, our just Apprehensions of a Party, who declar'd their Resolutions, if possible, to repeat and dissolve it; who waited for an Opportunity to come to the Spoil; and having in the former Reigns more or less ruin'd, impoverish'd, or injur'd above seventy thousand Families of the *Dissenters*, wanted to be embark'd in the same *Draconing* Employment again.

When we were oppress'd with these Apprehensions, what were our Thoughts? what did we say to one another in our Discourses; What was it we wish'd for? Did we not fill our selves with Fears of persecuting Laws passing under the Cover of preventing Hypocrisy? Did we not see the Party bent to frighten and reduce us, and were not the Increases of their Number and Power very formidable? Did not the leaving out the Declaration against Persecution, which made up the Preamble of the first Bill against *Occasional Conformity*, in these words, *viz. Whereas Persecution for Conscience-sake is contrary to the Principles of the Christian Religion, and to the Church of England*; I say, did not the leaving out this Declaration in the subsequent Bills justly, alarm us, and fully satisfy both the *Dissenters* and all the World, that the real Design was to renew their Persecutions and Harassings of *Dissenters*? and did not the barbarous Treatment of the *Dissenters* in *Carolina*, under the Party-Tyranny of the same Men, and of which the World will shortly see the Particulars, give us us a fair Prospect of their Design? Did not the obstinate pursuit of this Cry against the *Dissenters*, and the renewing their Attempts every Year, make us sometimes apt to despair of being able to resist, and often conclude, *We should one Day fall by the hand of this Saul*? Did we not see the Noise of the Churches Danger, very aptly call'd a *Noise about Nothing*, exactly Calculated to stir up the Nation against us, and the Party prompting Men to believe, that unless the *Dissenters* were Suppress'd, the Church could not stand; and that the Mob must be brought upon us, since the Government could not; and were we not justly fill'd with Fears of our Approaching Destruction, from the black Prospect of these things?

Under these Dark Apprehensions, what was our Hope, what our Relief, what was the frequent Wishes we us'd to express to one another? Was it not entirely the Confidence and Trust in the Royal Word? How often have we said one to another, Well, if Her Majesty will but keep her Promise with us, we are safe enough? How often have

our doubting Friends put that Question to one another? ——— What shall we do if both Houses should pass this Bill? *Do you think the Queen will pass it?* I shall not descend to the many other things; the Fears of very Honest, Well-Meaning People suggested to them on that occasion; when Ruine and Destruction were so near in View, and there seem'd little to Intervene, but the bare Promise of the Prince, things we had found in former Reigns, no great Encouragement to depend upon.

Under all these Doubts and Agonies of Mind, how often did we use to say, let them but let us be Quiet, we ask nothing of them; let us but Enjoy the Toleration of our Religion, we are satisfi'd; let us but be assur'd we shall not be Persecuted, Harass'd, and Plunder'd, and we shall be Contented.

I forbear to repeat the many Expressions of the Satisfaction, and the Modest Terms, on which the *Dissenters* always Declar'd they should be easie and satisfi'd; because, I hope, they will effectually discover the Sincerity of their Thoughts then, by the Easiness and Satisfaction of their Temper and Minds, under the Enjoyment of the fullest of their Desires.

From these Retrospects, let us Examine our present Circumstance; now, *Gentlemen*, your Wishes are Accomplish'd, all you hoped for is come to pass; Her Majesty has punctually kept her Royal Promise with you, and renew'd it upon all occasions; 'tis not the maintaining the Toleration only, but Her Majesty has added a Term to it, that puts you into a degree of Safety beyond your Expectation.

The Word *INVIOLABLY*, assures you, that Her Majesty will suffer no Invasion upon your Religious Liberties; that the Toleration shall have its full Extent, shall not be subject to Constructive Malice, and you shall Enjoy not only what some People call Toleration, but all that you can pretend is Compris'd, and was intended by Toleration; you are effectually secur'd in the Possession of this Liberty, and all the Efforts to Destroy or Abridge it, prove A-

bortive in the Conception, or miscarry in the carrying on.

The Clamour rais'd of the Danger of the Church is sunk at once; the suddain Must-room is blasted with the Royal Breath; all the Designs of bringing the *Dissenters* into the Noose of Slander by it, and to render them Odious to the Church, and bring the Rabble into an opinion of their being Designing its Ruine, are Damo'd by Parliament, Exploded by Proclamation. The Innocent declar'd so, and set free from the Black Brand fixt upon them by those Sons of Slander, who now hide their Heads, and being so Foolish as to Embark the Queen, the Government and the *Dissenters* on one Plot together, they are also so faint-hearted, as not to appear to the Charge, and now abscond from the Publick Justice of the Nation.

What remains now, Gentlemen, but TO BE CONTENTED; that is, as I noted before, be *Pleas'd and Thankful*.

The Queen, the Parliament, Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Declare you free from the Horrid Charge; the Church is in no Danger from you, for she is in no Danger at all——See the Vote, hearken to the Voice of the whole Nation, Voted in Parliament, Proclaim'd from the Throne.

Resolved, " By the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in Parliament Assembled, That the Church of *England*, as by Law Establish'd, which was Rescu'd from the Extreme Danger by King *William III.* of Glorious Memory, is now by God's Blessing under the Happy Reign of Her Majesty, in a most Safe and Flourishing Condition; and that whosoever goes about to Suggest and Insinuate, That the Church is in Danger under Her Majesty's Administration, is an Enemy to the Queen, the Church, and Kingdom,

I cannot but take the Liberty, to Note a few things from the happy Publication of this Proclamation, but the Compass of my time being so short, you must be content with General Observations.

1. Here is a Living Testimony under the Queen's

Queen's own Hand, and Agreed to by the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament: *An Authority, that, I think, leaves no room to Dispute it*; to several things which, however they may believe them to be True, some People abhor to own.

1. *That the Memory of King William is Glorious*; let then those *Englishmen* blush, that load that Glorious Prince's Memory with Infamous Slanders, and Endeavour to lessen that just Esteem, every Honest Protestant reserves for him in his Mind.

2. *That the Church of England, was in the extreamest Danger.*

3. *That King William Rescued the Church from that Danger.* Ungrateful Protestants of the Church are: they then, that slight that Deliverance, and blacken the Fame of their Deliverer.

4. *That the Church is now in a MOST SAFE Condition*; a Clear Vindication of the Dissenters, from the Scandalous Aspersions of the Present Malecontent Party, who Represent the Church in Danger from the Dissenters.

2. Here is a Discriminating Character of the Churches real Enemies, Declar'd by Queen, Lords, and Commons, viz. Those who Insinuate the Church's Danger, when there is really none at all.

3. *The Memorial*, in all its Virulent Parts, is Declar'd a Malicious and Seditious Libel, as well where it Reproaches and Abuses the Dissenters, as the Queen and Government; it has run the Fate of the Hangman, and the Fire; and its Owners Acknowledge their Guilt, in their Fear to own their Principles.

For God Sake, Gentlemen, and for your own Sake, BE CONTENT. Are there a few things more you could wish were done for you? Resolve those *Nilhes* into these two Conclusions;

1. Wait till Providence, if it shall be for your Good, shall bring them to pass; Or,

2. Be Easy and Content in the mean time; Compare the Present with the past

Circumstances; and let me tell you, you cannot Repine, Murmure, or be Discontented, without the highest Ingratitude both to God and Man.

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